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### Solving the Pet Overpopulation Problem

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# OF THE UNITED STATES **The Humane Society**

## CLOSE-UP REPORT

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### ***Solving the Pet Overpopulation Problem***

*The HSUS Promotes Its Blueprint for Success*

U.S. animal shelters must euthanize up to 13 million unwanted animals every year. But the shelters that follow The HSUS's simple formula of *legislation, education, and sterilization* (LES) report a decrease of between 30 and 60 percent in euthanasia rates!

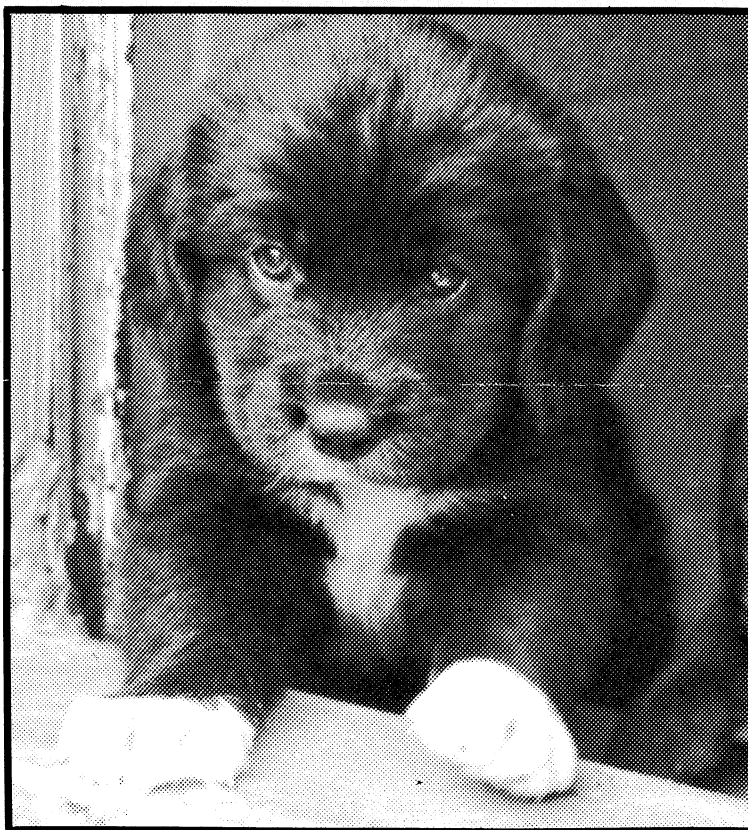
For those few shelters, it's been a successful fight to date. But for many others the battle is far from over. Further victories depend on your help. Each cat or dog that has a warm home and loving owners but is allowed to breed will eventually be the source of thousands more kittens or puppies. Most of these new lives will encounter only the cruelty and deprivation of being unwanted and homeless. The responsibility for this surplus rests on human shoulders.

Because of the short pregnancies and large litters of dogs and cats, one individual female with all her female offspring reproducing similarly

can be the source of over 4,000 new lives within seven years. Some of these animals will find homes com-

plete with laps to sit on and fireplaces to enjoy, but millions of other perfectly healthy dogs and cats won't be so lucky. The overabundance of these potential pets tends to cheapen the intrinsic value of each individual animal in the eyes of the general public. The swelling problem causes some people to use cruel methods of disposing of unwanted pets, such as abandoning them along highways, or drowning them, regardless of the availability of an animal shelter.

Unfortunately, animal shelters are not always a guarantee of a homeless pet's safety, either. Dealers, eager to take advantage of a readily available source of revenue, can buy animals from certain shelters for a few dollars a head and resell them at a profit to experimental laboratories. Tragically, it is not only unwanted animals that end up in a dealer's truck; lost, unlicensed pets that are unclaimed at those animal  
*(continued on next page)*



*This puppy is part of the sad circle of overpopulation. If it is not adopted, it will die. If it is adopted and allowed to breed, it will produce more puppies which face homelessness. The HSUS has the step-by-step plan to break this circle. With your help, we can succeed.*

HSUS/Wilson

shelters by their owners could also land in a laboratory.

The most cunning of a society's unwanted animals will survive on their own, picking food out of garbage cans, staying warm under parked cars, finding water where they can, and staying out of harm's way. They will also breed. Although somewhere in their lineage was a fluffy kitten or puppy delighting humans with play and affection, that animal wasn't neutered, and that pet owner must share the blame for the unwanted stray and its unwanted litters.

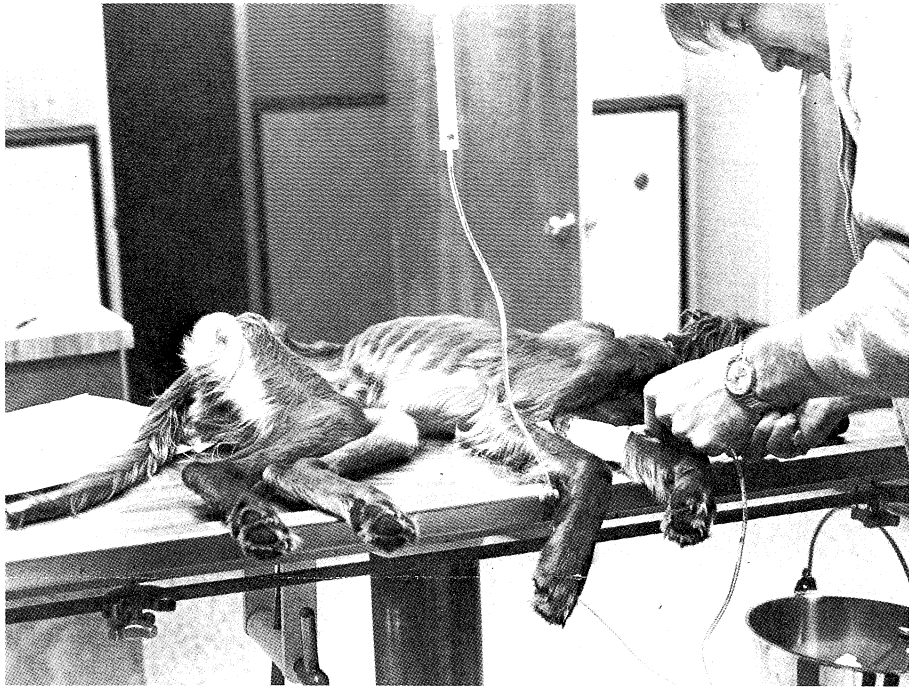
The majority of dogs and cats turned into animal shelters, however, are the result of unthinking or uneducated individuals who purposely breed their pets. They think that they can find homes for their new kittens or that they owe their adult pet the right to experience motherhood. Of course, they know that if no homes can be found, the kittens or puppies can always go to the animal shelter. The harsh reality is that those animals have only a slim chance of being adopted. Most are euthanatized because there are simply no homes for them.

Because of pet owner irresponsibility, too many unwanted animals are born each year only to meet tragic ends. Animal shelters are proving, however, that with The HSUS's program of legislation, education, and sterilization, they can decrease the number of animals they must kill. For example, an Ohio shelter that euthanatized 2,913 animals in 1979 had to destroy only 1,151 in 1981 because it had followed the LES plan. A California humane society reported a drop from 14,000 euthanatized animals in 1972 to 4,373 in 1979. A Canadian shelter witnessed a drastic plummet from 80,000 in 1976 to 15,300 in 1981! The HSUS's plan works! Now we have to make it work in all our communities.

The LES plan is a three-pronged attack. No one single element can work alone.

It is vital that the first element in a society's program be *legislation* designed to mandate differential licensing (the license fee is less when the pet has been sterilized), leash laws, and sterilization of pets, particularly those adopted from public and private animal shelters. Cities are well aware of the immense public financial burden of pet overpopulation. The cost of taking strays off the streets, preventing rabies and dog bites, and picking up dead animals (12

(continued on back page)



Because of their overabundance, pets are more likely to fall into the wrong hands. The owner of this starved Irish setter tied it to a backyard stake and left town. This vet's efforts to save the dog failed.

## What Is Pet Overpopulation?

Pet owners must stop their animals from breeding. There simply are not homes for the offspring. According to the Population Division of the U.S. Census Bureau, 450 U.S. citizens are born every hour. The HSUS estimates that 2,500 to 3,000 dogs and cats are born every hour. There is no way that responsible pet owners could assume responsibility for that many excess animals, even if each one of those 450 people was to adopt a dog or cat. As it stands now, only 52 percent of the U.S. households owns pets. At least 70 percent of the dogs and cats brought into public and private shelters must be euthanatized — a tragic waste of precious life.

These shelter figures do not reflect the huge numbers of unwanted animals roaming neighborhoods or the surplus puppies and kittens given away through signs and advertisements in local papers. People use the animal shelter when they cannot foist their surplus animals on friends and neighbors. For every contented, well-cared-for dog and cat there are probably 9 others unfortunate enough to spend their short lives at the mercy of freezing weather, cruel humans, and speeding cars. If luck turns their way, they will meet the sad kindness of euthanasia in an animal shelter.

## What The HSUS Is Doing

The HSUS is putting LES into action on a national scale:

Our *legislative* work repeatedly proves that passing a law is one of the most effective tools for solving animal problems. We have testified in 30 states and on Capitol Hill regarding humane euthanasia, animal fighting, pets and the elderly, the need for spay/neuter programs, and improved animal ordinances.

Laws are meaningless unless they are accompanied by adequate *education* on the need for these laws. A leash law, for example, reduces dog bites and controls the number of lost pets. It also helps keep dogs from spilling garbage, threatening neighbors, and getting hit by cars. The general public must know this if it is to support and observe such an ordinance in its communities.

The HSUS has sent public service announcements to over 600 radio stations and 460 television stations in the country to inform listeners of the importance of neutering and leashing their pets. Camera-ready ads have been printed and made available to anyone who will place them in local papers and magazines. We publish booklets on how to start spay/neuter clinics and even a Spanish-language pamphlet on the effects of pet overpopulation and the importance of sterilization.

The HSUS also conducts the Animal Control Academy, the nation's only two-week training seminar for animal-control personnel. Certified by the University of Alabama's Department of Law Enforcement, it covers such topics as small animal handling, passage and enforcement of animal-control ordinances, and humane education in school programs. Academy students can return to their shelters to help improve both animal and community services. We offer a two-day workshop for animal-shelter board members, city council members, and local HSUS members, "Solving Animal Problems in Your Community." This consciousness-raising program is designed to underscore the need for and the availability of systematic animal-control solutions. It provides action programs for participants to take back to their communities.

Although The HSUS does not directly *sterilize* animals, it can provide expertise to help communities set up and promote cooperative programs with local veterinarians or their own spay/neuter clinics. HSUS staff experts provide data from successful programs documenting the benefits of clinics that offer reduced fees for the service. The HSUS has also promoted other methods of encouraging pet sterilization, such as differential licensing and mandatory sterilization of adopted shelter pets. Our resources are your resources!



Before the first year is over, this mother will be nursing a new litter and these kittens will have litters of their own. This relatively small family can balloon to over 4,000 new lives within seven years. Far too many will be homeless. Community members and animal shelters can end this tragedy by adopting The HSUS's blueprint for success.

tons in Atlanta in one year) proves to municipalities there is an urgent need for a strong animal-control program.

U.S. communities can solve this problem by passing ordinances requiring that all animals adopted from public and private animal shelters be sterilized. They can also mandate dog and cat licensing through which they can keep track of the numbers of pets, certify vaccinations, and help officials return lost dogs and cats to their owners. Differential licensing can further encourage neutering of pets. For instance, before Los Angeles mandated differential licensing, only 11 percent of the licensed dogs were neutered in 1972. With differential licensing, the percentage rose to 54 percent in 1979. Leash laws also help cities reduce

overpopulation by requiring owners to keep their pets under physical control.

The second important element of effective population control is *education*. Pet owners and their children should be taught that they could end the pet overpopulation problem. They need to realize that owning a pet is a lifetime commitment. Uneducated pet owners are frequently overwhelmed by their animal's needs for training, care, and companionship. As a result, owners account for at least 50 percent of all unwanted pets turned in to the animal shelters. The dejection these animals suffer is heartbreaking.

The third element in overpopulation control is, of course, *sterilization*. In addition to legislating mandatory neutering of all adopted shelter

pets, communities can also provide several kinds of sterilization services. In many cases, cooperative programs with private veterinarians will offer spay and neuter services for a reduced fee. Local governments and humane societies can operate sterilization clinics. Many communities offer these services to pet owners regardless of their ability to pay.

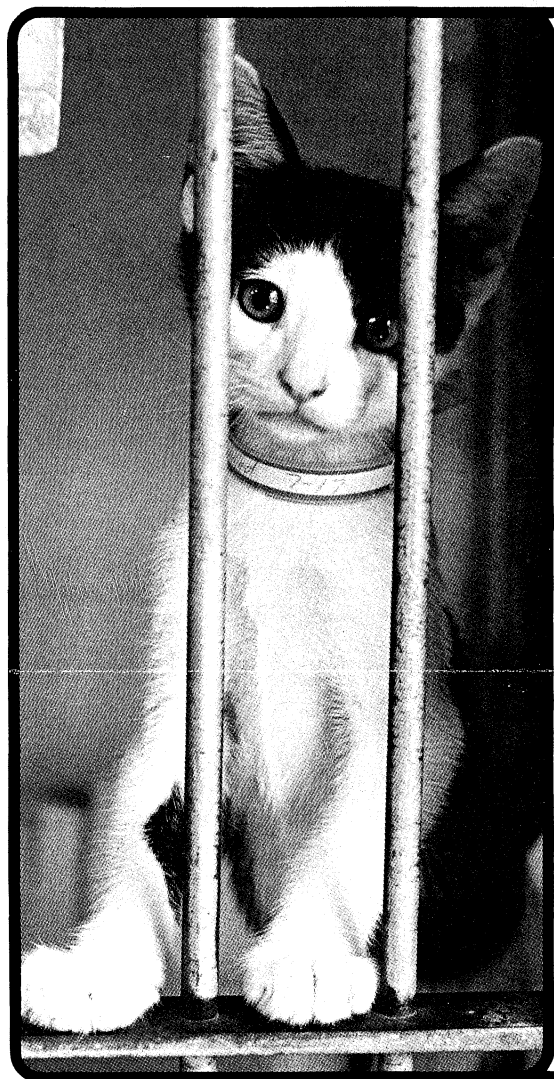
It is possible to put a lid on pet overpopulation. The solution is no mystery. The HSUS has done the research and the legwork. Now we need your help to put our answers into action. If The HSUS can double the number of communities adopting this blueprint for success, in five years we can save five million unwanted animals from cruel treatment or early death.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Up to 13 million animals must suffer an early death in the United States because they do not have a home. Their numbers and tragedy are a national disgrace. But the solution is no mystery. The HSUS has the blueprint for successful pet overpopulation control. All you need to do is follow it and you can help eliminate a vast amount of suffering in your community.

- Talk to your government officials. Urge your legislators to pass mandatory sterilization laws and impress upon them the vital importance of establishing humane education programs. Send HSUS materials to your city council members. The first step to eliminating the suffering of animal overpopulation is through the front door of your municipal building.
- Educate your family, friends, and neighbors. Request a publications list from The HSUS detailing our educational materials. The HSUS publishes posters, ads, and pamphlets describing the importance of responsible pet ownership. Order some and distribute them in your schools, libraries, movie theaters, and supermarkets.
- Sterilize your own pets. Regardless of whether or not it has a home, every newborn puppy or kitten compounds the overpopulation problem.
- Finally, support The HSUS's efforts to spread this working blueprint for success around the country. We want to share this information with your community. Your help is critical if we are to continue developing educational materials, conducting classes throughout the country, and affecting local and national legislation. Please use the enclosed postage-paid envelope to send your gift to help The HSUS help animals!

— HSUS/Halden



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